POEMS

CLINTON SCOLLARD

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POEMS

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BY

CLINTON SCOLLARD

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK :: THE
RIVERSIDE PRESS CAMBRIDGE
1914

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Published November 1914

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I spoke a traveler on the road
Who smiled beneath his leaden load;
"How play you such a blithesome part?"
"Comrade, I bear a singing heart!"

I questioned one whose path with pain
In the grim shadows long had lain,
"How face you thus life's thorny smart?"
"Comrade, I bear a singing heart!"

I hailed one whom adversity
Could not make bend the hardy knee,
"How such brave seeming? Tell the art!"
"Comrade, I bear a singing heart!"

Friend, blest be thou if thou canst say
Upon the inevitable way
Whereon we fare, sans guide or chart, —
"Comrade, I bear a singing heart!"

OUT OF THE ORIENT

AS I CAME DOWN FROM LEBANON

As I came down from Lebanon,
Came winding, wandering slowly down
Through mountain passes bleak and brown,
The cloudless day was well-nigh done.
The city, like an opal, set
In emerald, showed each minaret
Afire with radiant beams of sun,
And glistened orange, fig and lime
Where song-birds made melodious chime,
As I came down from Lebanon.

As I came down from Lebanon,
Like lava in the dying glow,
Through olive orchards far below
I saw the murmuring river run;
And 'neath the wall upon the sand
Swart shekhs from distant Samarcand,
With precious spices they had won,
Lay long and languidly in wait
Till they might pass the guarded gate,
As I came down from Lebanon.

As I came down from Lebanon,
I saw strange men from lands afar
In mosque and square and gay bazaar, —

OUT OF THE ORIENT

The Magi that the Moslem shun,
And grave Effendi from Stamboul
Who sherbet sipped in corners cool;
And, from the balconies o'errun
With roses, gleamed the eyes of those
Who dwell in still seraglios,
As I came down from Lebanon.

As I came down from Lebanon,
The flaming flower of daytime died,
And Night, arrayed as is a bride
Of some great king in garments spun
Of purple and the finest gold,
Out-bloomed in glories manifold!
Until the moon above the dun
And darkening desert, void of shade,
Shone like a keen Damascus blade,
As I came down from Lebanon!

KHAMSIN

Oh, the wind from the desert blew in! —
Khamsin,
The wind from the desert, blew in!
It blew from the heart of the fiery south,
From the fervid sand and the hills of drouth,
And it kissed the land with its scorching mouth;
The wind from the desert blew in!

It blasted the buds on the almond bough,
And shriveled the fruit on the orange tree;
The wizened dervish breathed no vow
So weary and parched was he.
The lean muezzin could not cry;
The dogs ran mad, and bayed the sky;
The hot sun shone like a copper disk,
And prone in the shade of an obelisk
The water-carrier sank with a sigh,
For limp and dry was his water-skin;
And the wind from the desert blew in.

The camel crouched by the crumbling wall,
And, oh, the pitiful moan it made!
The minarets, taper and slim and tall,
Reeled and swam in the brazen light;

And prayers went up by day and night,
But thin and drawn were the lips that prayed.
The river writhed in its slimy bed,
Shrunk to a tortuous, turbid thread;
The burnt earth cracked like a cloven rind;
And still the wind, the ruthless wind,
Khamsin,
The wind from the desert, blew in!

Into the cool of the mosque it crept,
Where the poor sought rest at the Prophet's shrine;
Its breath was fire to the jasmine vine;
It fevered the brow of the maid who slept,
And men grew haggard with revel of wine.

The tiny fledgelings died in the nest;
The sick babe gasped at the mother's breast.
Then a rumor rose and swelled and spread
From a tremulous whisper faint and vague,
Till it burst in a terrible cry of dread,
The plague! the plague! the plague! —
Oh, the wind, Khamsin,
The scourge from the desert, blew in!

THE SHEKH ABDALLAH

What does the Shekh Abdallah do
In the long, dull time of the Ramadan?
Why, he rises and says his prayers, and then
He sleeps till the prayer-hour comes again;
And thus through the length of the weary day
Does he sleep and pray, and sleep and pray.
Whenever the swart muezzin calls
From the crescent-guarded minaret walls,
Up he leaps and bows his turbaned brows
Toward Mecca, this valiant and holy man,
The Shekh Abdallah — praise be to Allah! —
In the long, dull time of the Ramadan.

What does the Shekh Abdallah do
In the long, dull time of the Ramadan?
Why, he fasts and fasts without reprieve
From the blush of morn till the blush of eve.
Never so much as a sip takes he
Of the fragrant juice of the Yemen berry;
He shakes no fruit from the citron tree,
Nor plucks the pomegranate, nor tastes the cherry.
His sandal beads seem to tell of deeds
That were wrought by the hand of the holy man,
The Shekh Abdallah — praise be to Allah! —
In the long, dull time of the Ramadan.

What does the Shekh Abdallah do
In the long, dull time of the Ramadan?
Why, he calls his servants, and just as soon
As in the copses the night-birds croon,
A roasted kid is brought steaming in,
And then does the glorious feast begin;
Smyrna figs and nectarines fine,
Golden flasks of Lebanon wine,
Sherbet of rose and pistachios,
All are spread for the holy man,
The Shekh Abdallah — praise be to Allah! —
In the long, dull time of the Ramadan.

What does the Shekh Abdallah do
In the long, dull time of the Ramadan?
Why, when the cloying feast is o'er,
Dancers foot it along the floor;
Night-long to the sound of lute and viol
There is wine-mad mirth and the lilt of song,
And loving looks that brood no denial
From a radiant, rapturous throng.
"Morn calls to prayers, now away with cares!"
He cries (this *faithful* and *holy* man!)
The Shekh Abdallah — praise be to Allah! —
In the long, dull time of the Ramadan.

THE DANCING OF SULEIMA

When Suleima, the bayadere,
Danced for Selim, the Grand Vizier,
The fountain spurtled, with mellow fret,
Out of its mouth of jade and jet;
And lanterns, hued like the rainbow's arc,
In the citron branches, dotted the dark;
And over the courtyard's burnished tiles
Cast their shimmer, and made her seem,
With all the glamourie of her smiles,
Like a houri out of paradise,
Luring with Lilith lips and eyes, —
The creature of a dream!

When Suleima, the bayadere,
Danced for Selim the Grand Vizier,
Pleadingly the viols played
In the dusk of the feathery bamboo shade;
And the zithers wove their tinkling spells
In tune with her golden anklet bells;
While a tensely chorded dulcimer,
And a reed with the tenderest touch of tone,
Into the melody throbbed to blur
The whole to a wondrous rhapsody
That lapped and eddied about her, — she,
Harmony's very own!

OUT OF THE ORIENT

When Suleima, the bayadere,
Danced for Selim, the Grand Vizier,
Out of the midnight of her hair
Star-shine darted adown the air
From orbèd diamonds; her virgin arms
Showed no cincture of jeweled charms,
But a girdle glistened around her waist,
Where rubies glowed with their pulse of fire;
As light and white as the foam and chaste,
Were the folds that floated about her form,
Palpitant, gracile, willowy, warm, —
A vision of desire!

When Suleima, the bayadere,
Danced for Selim, the Grand Vizier,
Such was the lightness of her tread,
Such was the pose of her shapely head,
Such was the motion of every limb, —
Flexuous wrist and ankle slim, —
Subtly swaying from head to heel,
That the hearts of those who watched her there,
Marked her poise and glide and wheel
In measures intricate as a maze,
Were ever after, for all their days,
Thrall to a sweet despair!

When Suleima, the bayadere,
Danced for Selim, the Grand Vizier, —

For him who had crept so nigh to the throne
That in dreams he saw it his very own, —
The wave of a riotous unrest
Surged, of a sudden, within his breast.
More to him than the monarch's crown
To quaff from her lips of passion's wine,
His face in her billowy hair to drown!
And he swore a great oath under his breath,
While his hands were clenched like one in death,
"By Allah, she shall be mine!"

When Suleima, the bayadere,
Danced for Selim, the Grand Vizier,
In the lure of her smile was fate,
In her bosom was hidden hate, —
Hate, and the canker of ceaseless pain
For her soul's beloved, foully slain.
So, with brighter blandishment, her eyes
Burned on those of the Grand Vizier,
And she opened her arms in witching wise,
While a sensuous something in her tread,
"All is thine, if thou askest," said, —
Suleima, the bayadere!

When Suleima, the bayadere,
Danced for Selim, the Grand Vizier,
And the last low strain of the music died,
And the raptured courtiers turned aside

Through the heavy scent of the citron bloom,
And the fading lanterns wrought a gloom,
Making a shadowy bower of the place
That was meet for love and love's delight,
Back from an instant's mad embrace
The Vizier reeled to moan and die;
While a laugh, and a woman's triumph cry, —
"*Revenge!*" — thrilled down the night.

CHANT OF PRESTER JOHN

Far in the golden heart of the dawn
This was the Chant of Prester John.

In a land of lily and asphodel,
In a city of forty towers I dwell;
Never a cursèd crescent there,
But a thousand crosses hung in air
That through each circling season knows
The scent of the paradisal rose!
My palace poises upon a height
Burning with beryl and chrysolite;
Therein the throne of my power is set,
Fashioned of jasper and of jet,
In a court where flows the Fountain of Youth, —
Whose dazzling dome is the Mirror of Truth.

Around my throne upon every hand
Do kings and princes and bishops stand,—
Croziered bishops and sceptred kings,
Enrobed in ermine with garnishings
Of pale moon-silver and crusted gold.
At the opal gateway manifold
Knights and squires in their armor are,
Each with a cross like a blazing star

In his massy helmet sunken deep;
And never the watchful warders sleep,
Lifting ever a warrior's song, —
"Death to the Wrong! Death to the Wrong!"

And when in the ranks of war I ride,
No bright banner in purple pride
Over the host flaunts boastfully;
But mighty, marvellous crosses three,
With a million facets raying light,
Beacon the army on to the fight.
And when the burst of our conflict-cry
Sweeps and surges up to the sky,
Palsy of fear foreboding woe
Shakes the heart of the paynim foe;
And still shall our battle-burden be, —
"Christ for the right and Victory!"

Far in the mists of the ages gone
This was the Chant of Prester John!

THE CARAVAN

From underneath the carob shade,
A wavering line of gray and white,
I watch it lose its form and fade
Like dreams across the face of night.

Whither it goes I can but guess;
Haply where ruined Tadmor stands,
The voiceless haunt of loneliness,
Amid the desert's swirling sands;

Or toward the Tigris' tawny tide
Into that land of ancient thrift
Where Bagdad's rich bazaars spread wide,
And Haroun's minarets uplift;

Or toward the swart Arabian skies,
The home of sempiternal calms,
Where pilgrims seek their paradise
Through Mecca, girdled with its palms.

Yet howsoe'er it fares, I fare;
In buoyant spirit I am one
With those that drink the untrammeled air,
The nomad children of the sun.

OUT OF THE ORIENT

Sandaled with silence, on I press,
  Rousing before the flower of morn,
Through spaces where forgetfulness
  Seems to have dwelt since Time was born.

And when, with soothing touch, comes night
  After the round of jars and joys,
Above the head, in Allah's sight,
  The hosts of heaven wheel and poise.

Throughout the strangely tranquil days
  I join in prayer and fast and feast,
Looking on life with long, slow gaze
  As does the fatalistic East.

And then — and then — the goal! — Ah, me!
  At last, wherever rangeth man,
How well we know that there must be
  One bourn for every caravan!

THE RIDE

We rose in the clear, cool dawning, and greeted the
eastern star;
"*To saddle!*" — our shout rang sharply out by the
huts of Kerf Hawar.
The dervish slept by the wayside, the dog still dozed
by the door,
The yashmaked maid, with her water-jar, bent low by
the swift stream's shore.
The poplar leaves, as we mounted, turned white in
the veering wind,
And the icy peak of Hermon shone pyramidal behind.

We had looked on the towers of Hebron, and seen the
sunlight wane
Over Zion's massive citadel, and Omar's holy fane;
We had passed with pilgrim footsteps over Judah's
rocks and rills,
And seen the anemone-torches flare on the Galilean
hills.
But our eager hearts cried, "Onward! — beyond are
the fairest skies;
Where rippling Barada silvers down the bower of the
Prophet lies!"

So we plunged through the tranquil twilight ere the sun rolled grandly up,
And brimmed the sky with its amber as Lebanon wine a cup.
We dashed down the bare brown wadies, where echo called from the crag;
There was never a hoof to linger, and never a foot to lag;
We raced where the land lay level, and we spurred it, black and bay,
Till the crimson bud of the morning flowered full into dazzling day.

The dim, dark speck in the distance grew green and broad and large,
And lo, a minaret's slender spear on the line of its widening marge!
Then, oh, what a cheer we lifted, and, oh, how we forward flew,
And, oh, the balm of the greeting breeze that out from the gardens blew!
And now we rode in the shadow of boughs that were blossom-sweet,
While the gurgle of crystal waters rilled up through the swooning heat.

Pink were the rich pomegranates, a rosy cloud to the sight,

And the fluttering bloom of the orange was white in the zenith light;
And sudden, or ever we dreamed it, did the orchards give apart,
And there was the bowered city with the flood of its orient heart;
There was the endless pageant that surged through the arching gate;
There was the slim Bride's Minaret, and the ancient "street called Straight."

For us there were growing marvels, and a wonder-wealth untold
In the opulent glow of the daytime, in night with its moon of gold;
For sherbet and song and roses, with a love-smile flashed between,
Recur, like the beat of a measure, in the life of a Damascene. —
We will rise again in visions, by the gleam of the morning star,
And ride to the pearl of cities from the huts of Kerf Hawar.

DAWN IN THE DESERT

WHEN the first opal presage of the morn
Quickened the east, the good Merwan arose,
And by his open tent door knelt and prayed.

Now in that pilgrim caravan was one
Whose heart was heavy with dumb doubts, whose eyes
Drew little balm from slumber. Up and down
Night-long he paced the avenues of sand
'Twixt tent and tent, and heard the jackals snarl,
The camels moan for water. This one came
On Merwan praying, and to him outcried —
(The tortured spirit bursting its sealed fount
As doth the brook on Damavend in spring)
"How knowest thou that any Allah is?"
Swift from the sand did Merwan lift his face,
Flung toward the east an arm of knotted bronze,
And said, as upward shot a shaft of gold,
"*Dost need a torch to show to thee the dawn?*"
Then prayed again.

When on the desert's rim
In sudden awful splendor stood the sun,
Through all that caravan there was no knee
But bowed to Allah.

THE SPHINX

COUCHANT upon the illimitable sand,
  Like some huge Libyan lion, human-faced,
  The solemn march of centuries thou hast traced
With brooding eyes that seem to understand
The secrets of the ages, — whose the hand
  That rolls the stars along the ethereal waste,
  And for what purpose suffering man is placed
Upon this orb, to be or blessed or banned.

In elder years did suppliants bend the knee
Before thine awful presence reverently,
  Beseeching answer with adoring breath;
Yet wert thou mute, as thou wilt ever be,
Enigma, like our mortal destiny,
  Inscrutable as is the face of death!

IN PALESTINE

LONE is the land of a thousand wars, the home of a
solemn peace,
Where the past still shows her myriad scars as the
marching years increase;
No more are the princes proud of yore than the ashes
blown from a pyre,
And the jackal has his haunt in the tomb of Hiram,
king of Tyre.

A turbaned guard keeps stolid ward by the Zion gate
in the sun,
And the paynim bows his shaven brows at the shrine of
Solomon;
On the chosen altars long, long quenched is the flame
of the sacred fire,
And the jackal has his haunt in the tomb of Hiram,
king of Tyre.

Great Herod's pride, with its columned aisles, is
grown with the olive bough,
And Gath and Dan are but crumbling piles, while Gaza
is gateless now;
The sea on the sands of Ascalon sets hands to a
mournful lyre,
And the jackal has his haunt in the tomb of Hiram,
king of Tyre.

But the starry fame of one holy name still burns
through the mists of death;
It has set the crown of Time's renown on the brow of
Nazareth,
It has blazoned Bethlehem for aye the heart of the
world's desire,
While the jackal has his haunt in the tomb of Hiram,
king of Tyre.

HASSAN AND HASSOUN

Said Hassan to Hassoun:
"'T were a boon
If this love that enfolds us as fire,
This dream of delight and desire,
That is torture at midnight and noon,
Should lapse, should forever be laid
In sepulture, a shadowless shade,
Like a lifeless and lusterless moon,"
Said Hassan to Hassoun.

Said Hassoun to Hassan:
"You would ban
All our days and our ways with a gloom
Like the outermost regions of Doom!
We should dwell in one long Ramadan,
A fast with no feasting for aye,
And beauty and bloom plucked away,
And only a desert to scan,"
Said Hassoun to Hassan.

Said Hassan to Hassoun:
"'T is a tune
That tricks us, this love, that allures,
Till a frenzy engrips us no cures

May allay, for all bird-voices croon,
  And the winds and the waves alike frame
  One lyrically maddening name,
A very device of Mahoun,"
Said Hassan to Hassoun.

Said Hassoun to Hassan:
 "'T is a plan
  That Allah has shaped to uplift
  From the silt and the shard and the drift
The spirit we christen as 'man';
  Through it do our eyes first behold
  What the word of the Prophet foretold, —
Paradise, — for 't was there love began,"
Said Hassoun to Hassan.

Thus Hassan and Hassoun! —
Like a rune
  You may hear them run on and run on,
  Blithe Youth and Old Age that is wan,
Disputing from midnight till noon.
  While each speaks, so solemn, his part,
  What is love but the same in the heart,
Outlasting, an infinite span,
Both Hassoun and Hassan!

MEMNON

Why dost thou hail with songful lips no more
The glorious sunrise? — Why is Memnon mute
Whose voice was tuned as is the silvery flute
When Thebes sat queenly by the Nile's low shore?
The chained slaves sweat no longer at the oar,
No longer shrines are raised to man and brute,
Yet dawn by dawn the sun thou didst salute
Gives thee the greeting that it gave of yore.

What nameless spell is on thee? Dost thou wait
(Hoping and yearning through the years forlorn)
The old-time splendor and the regal state,
The glory and the power of empire shorn?
Oh, break the silence deep, defying fate,
And cry again melodious to the morn!

THE PRAYER

The slender leaves of the acacia trees
Hung parched and quivering in the desert breeze.

Straight westward, as a starving rook might fly,
One pyramid's dark apex cut the sky;

While sharp against the sapphire east were set
Resplendent dome and soaring minaret.

Beside the way, upon his prayer-mat prone,
A turbaned suppliant made his plaint alone.

The hot sun smote upon his humbled head;
"*Allah, have pity!*" — this was all he said.

His faltering tongue forgot the accustomed art,
And laid his unvoiced grief on Allah's heart.

EGYPT

The sun, a scarabæus of bronze gold,
Slowly ascends the heaven's eastern wall;
The immemorial palm-trees, towering tall,
Where Nile rolls seaward, fold on tawny fold,
Are mirrored in the water; and behold,
Above them, hued like skies at evenfall,
Flamingoes in their flight majestical
Wing as they winged ere yet the world waxed old!

Silence and Death and Time and all things hoar
Brood here, — and man, how like a shade he seems,
Now seen, now gone, ephemera of an hour!
Pharaoh and Ptolemy, mighty names of yore,
To-day are but as sounds dim-heard in dreams,
And but as shards the remnants of their power!

THE MINSTREL

He played on the single string
Of a strange lute warped and old,
And sang and sang till the gray walls rang
To the ditty weird he trolled.
Sweet was the languid air,
The sun was hot and high,
And ruby-red the pomegranates spread
Their bloom to the Syrian sky.

A turban green he wore,
And a flowing robe of white;
With a rhythmic grace he moved, and his face
Was black as the Nubian night.
Why had he strayed from the clime
Where the scorching siroc blows,
To sing in the bowers of the citron flowers
And the red Damascus rose?

I can but think he was one
Of that dusky, mythic band
Who weave dark spells in the fountained dells
Of the swart Arabian land;
A genie, slave of a ring,
A roamer of earth and air,

At the will of some young Aladdin come
To lure with a fatal snare.

His vision haunts me still,
Haunts in the height of noon,
And again up-floats in wild low notes
His mystic Arabic croon;
It bears me there once more
Where the silvery Pharpar flows,
And I stray in the bowers of the citron flowers
And the red Damascus rose!

NIGHT IN THE DESERT

With star-dust scintillant the vault is sown;
But the vague vastitude of lower air
Is as a purple shroud about the bare
And billowy sand-waste ominously lone.
Heavy with sleep, no more the camels moan;
Slumber has sealed the pious pilgrim's prayer;
And save the lion, loping from his lair,
There is no wanderer in this desert zone.

The silence quivers if one starts from dreams,
But not with sound. The rigor of suspense
Were broken could a bird or brook but sing.
But, ah, the stillness that so breathless seems!
The awful solitude, the imminence
As of some unimaginable thing!

LIFE AND NATURE

IF ONLY THE DREAMS ABIDE

If the things of earth must pass
Like the dews upon the grass,
Like the mists that break and run
At the forward sweep of the sun,
I shall be satisfied
If only the dreams abide.

Nay, I would not be shorn
Of gold from the mines of morn!
I would not be bereft
Of the last blue flower in the cleft, —
Of the haze that haunts the hills,
Or the moon that the midnight fills!
Still would I know the grace
Upon love's uplifted face,
And the slow, sweet joy-dawn there
Under the dusk of her hair.

I pray thee, spare me, Fate,
The woeful, wearying weight
Of a heart that feels no pain
At the sob of the autumn rain,
And takes no breath of glee
From the organ-surge of the sea, —

Of a mind where memory broods
Over songless solitudes!
I shall be satisfied
If only the dreams abide.

HALCYON WEATHER

Here's to the halcyon weather,
And the wild, unfettered will,
The crickets chirring, the west wind stirring
The hemlocks on the hill!
Here's to the faring foot, and here's to the dreaming eye!
And here's to the heart that will not be still
Under the open sky!

Ever the gypsy longing
Comes when the halcyons wing;
Once you own it, once you have known it,
Oh, the thrall of the thing!
A flute-call and a lute-call quavering loud or low,
It clutches you with its rapturing,
And it will not let you go!

So it's hail to you, my rover,
The god-child of the sun!
In our heir-dom, — freedom from care-dom, —
You and I are one!
One with the many migrants, field-folk feathered or furred,
Ever ready to rally and run
At the sign of the silvery word!

The ways we were wont to follow,
  We are fain of them no more;
Rather the braided boughs and the shaded
  Paths by the rillet shore! —
The tansy hints and the myrrh of mints, and the
    balms that the balsams shed,
  The berries, crimson-sweet at the core,
By these are we lured and led.

Then here's to the halcyon weather,
  And the old, untrammeled will, —
Cicadas tuning, the west wind crooning
  Behind the crest of the hill!
Here's to the truant foot, and here's to the
    dreaming eye!
  And here's to the heart that will not be still
Under the open sky!

IN THE LIBRARY

From the oriels, one by one,
Slowly fades the setting sun;
On the marge of afternoon
Stands the new-born crescent moon;
In the twilight's crimson glow
Dim the quiet alcoves grow;
Drowsy-lidded Silence smiles
On the long, deserted aisles;
Out of every shadowy nook
Spirit faces seem to look,
Some with smiling eyes, and some
With a sad entreaty dumb; —
He who shepherded his sheep
On the wild Sicilian steep,
He above whose grave are set
Sprays of Roman violet; —
Poets, sages — all who wrought
In the crucible of thought.
Day by day as seasons glide
On the great eternal tide,
Noiselessly they gather thus
In the twilight beauteous,

Hold communion each with each,
Closer than our earthly speech,
Till within the east are born
Premonitions of the morn!

WANDERER'S SONG

THERE will be, when I come home, through the hill-gap
in the west,
The friendly smile of the sun on the fields that I love
best;
The red-topped clover here, and the white-whorled
daisy there,
And the bloom of the wilding briar that attars the
upland air;
There will be bird-mirth sweet — (mellower none may
know!) —
The flute of the hermit-thrush, the call of the vireo;
Pleasant gossip of leaves, and from the dawn to the
gloam
The lyric laughter of brooks, there will be when I come
home.

There will be, when I come home, the kindliness of the
earth —
Ah, how I love it all, bounteous breadth and girth!
The very sod will say, — tendril, fiber, and root, —
"Here is our foster-child, he of the wandering foot.
Welcome! welcome!" And, lo! I shall pause at a gate
ajar

That the leaning lilacs shade, where the honeysuckles
are;
I shall see the open door — Oh, farer over the foam,
The ease of this hunger of heart there will be when I
come home!

ON A BUST OF ANTINOUS

Upon your face, with all its youthful glory,
The mould of beauty with no base alloy,
Mournful I read your life's pathetic story,
Oh, blithe Bithynian boy!

How down your wood-ways green and meadows bloomy
Buoyant you roved through dreamy days and long,
And deeming naught within the world was gloomy,
Gave the gods praise and song;

Knelt, with your soft cheeks glowing, to Apollo,
Hung garlands fair where Venus was enshrined,
Heard dryad-voices from the tree-trunks hollow,
Faun-laughters on the wind.

How the proud Cæsar came and you departed,
Braving the reaches of the barren foam
To follow him, capricious, myriad-hearted,
Unto all-conquering Rome;

How by the Tiber, in the sunlight golden,
While round you frowned the Olympians, now disowned,

You pondered deep o'er many a volume olden
Of cruel creeds dethroned;

How, when encamped on fiery sands Egyptian,
You, seeking truth beneath their gods' dark brows,
Were lured to death by some priest-wrought inscription,
Believing in their vows;

I seem to see, clear-limned as with a stylus,
The last sad scene, your pitiful despair, —
The slow and somber flow of haunted Nilus
Drowning your parting prayer.

Thus in the loyal hope of fate forfending
From him whose guerdon was the end of joy,
You brought your life to sacrificial ending,
Oh, blithe Bithynian boy!

TAILLEFER THE TROUVERE

They sailed in their long gray galleys, they tossed on the narrow sea,
Till dim in the mists of morning were the shores of Normandy.
They were sixty thousand warriors, with never a fear at heart;
They were knights and squires and yeomen, adept in the soldier's art;
They were knights and squires and yeomen, whose school was the press of men,
Whose alphabet was their armor, whose sword was their only pen;
And none of the bold war-farers, though the flower of the land was there,
Bared braver brow to the southwind than Taillefer the Trouvere.

No laugh like his at the banquet, no hand like his on the lute,
No voice like his in the courtyard to banter the brawlers mute;
And never from lip of a jester did a blither quip take wing,

And never on caitiff's cuirass did a nobler brand outring.
But song was the soul of his living; aye, song was the breath of his life!
He had taken song to brother, he had taken song to wife.
In the tide-pulse of the ocean, in the wild wind-pulse of air,
There was more than mortal music to Taillefer the Trouvere.

They have harried the coast of Sussex, they have harried the coast of Kent;
They have trod the soil of the Saxon, and come to his peakèd tent, —
To the fortressed hill of Senlac that out of the marsh uprears,
Where the golden Wessex dragon is hedged with the gleam of spears.
They have girt them tight for the onset, they have leaped in line for the fray;
What manner of man shall lead them, shall show them the victor's way?
To be first to fall on a foeman what manner of man shall dare?
Neither valorous knight nor bowman, but Taillefer the Trouvere.

In front of the foremost footman he spurs with a clarion cry,
And raises the song of Roland to the apse of the glowing sky.
A moment the autumn's glory is a joy to the singer's sight,
And the war-lay soars the stronger, like a falcon, up the height;
Then springs there a Saxon hus-carl, with thews like the forest oak,
And, whirling a brand of battle, he launches a titan stroke;
A sudden and awful shadow, a blot on the azure glare,
And dawn in a world unbordered for Taillefer the Trouvere.

Shall song over-span the ages for the Duke men name the great
Who founded the walls of empire on the ruins of a state?
Nay, not unto him our greeting across the flood of the years
With the countless slain ensanguined, and bitter with mourner's tears!
But unto the soul of the singer, to him of the fearless heart,
Shall our hail-cry strengthen star-ward o'er the seas that have no chart;

For song was the love of his lifetime, and he met
death's chill eclipse
On the verge of the fight at Senlac with a song upon
his lips!

LET US TAKE LEAVE OF HASTE

Let us take leave of haste awhile,
And loiter, well content,
With little pleasure to beguile,
And small habiliment; —

Just a wide sweep of rain-washed sky,
A flower, a bird-note sweet;
Some easy trappings worn awry;
Loose latchets for our feet;

A wheaten loaf within our scrip;
For drink the hillside spring,
And for true heart-companionship
The love of loitering.

We want so much, and yet we need
So very slight a store,
But in the age's grip of greed
We hurry more and more.

The woodland weaves its gold-green net;
The warm wind lazes by;
Can we forego? can we forget?
Come, comrade, let us try!

SIDNEY GODOLPHIN

They rode from the camp at morn
With clash of sword and spur;
The birds were loud in the thorn,
The sky was an azure blur.
A gallant show they made
That warm noon-tide of the year,
Led on by a dashing blade,
By the poet-cavalier.

They laughed through the leafy lanes,
The long lanes of Dartmoor,
And they sang their soldier strains,
Pledged "death" to the Roundhead boor;
Then they came, at the middle day,
To a hamlet quaint and brown
Where the hated troopers lay,
And they cheered for the King and crown.

They fought in the fervid heat,
Fought fearlessly and well,
But low at the foeman's feet
Their valorous leader fell.
Full on his fair young face
The blinding sun beat down;

In the morn of his manly grace
He died for the King and crown.

Oh, the pitiless blow,
The vengeance-thrust of strife,
That blotted the golden glow
From the sky of his glad, brave life!
The glorious promise gone! —
Night, with its grim black frown!
Never again the dawn,
And all for the King and crown!

Hidden his sad fate now
In the sealèd book of the years;
Few are the heads that bow,
Or the eyes that brim with tears,
Reading 'twixt blots and stains
From a musty tome that saith
How he rode through the Dartmoor lanes
To his woeful, dauntless death.

But I, in the summer's prime,
From that lovely leafy land
Look back to the olden time,
And the leal and loyal band.
I see them dash along,
I hear them charge and cheer,
And my heart goes out in a song
To the poet-cavalier.

BAG–PIPES AT SEA

Above the shouting of the gale,
The whipping sheet, the dashing spray,
I heard, with notes of joy and wail,
A piper play.

Along the dipping deck he trod,
The dusk about his shadowy form;
He seemed like some strange ancient god
Of song and storm.

He gave his dim-seen pipes a skirl
And war went down the darkling air;
Then came a sudden subtle swirl,
And love was there.

What were the winds that flailed and flayed
The sea to him, the night obscure?
In dreams he strayed some brackened glade,
Some heathery moor.

And if he saw the slanting spars,
And if he watched the shifting track,
He marked, too, the eternal stars
Shine through the wrack.

And so amid the deep sea din,
  And so amid the wastes of foam,
Afar his heart was happy in
  His highland home!

A BELL

Had I the power
To cast a bell that should, from some grand tower,
At the first Christmas hour,
Out-ring,
And fling
A jubliant message wide,
The forgèd metals should be thus allied; —
No iron Pride,
But soft Humility and rich-veined Hope
Cleft from a sunny slope,
And there should be
White Charity,
And silvery Love, that knows not Doubt nor Fear,
To make the peal more clear;
And then, to firmly fix the fine alloy,
There should be Joy!

HOW PERISHES THE POMP

How perishes the pomp
That made a glowing glory of the swamp! —
The Persian purples that the asters wore,
The sumach-crimsons, and the ruby wine
Of dye that decked the delicate woodbine;
The golden ore
Of coreopsis, and the scarlet fires
Of interbraided briars!

Soon, all too soon,
Under the icy noon,
The melancholy moon,
Umber and ermine will the Year put on!
Yet Joy forever waits
A-tiptoe at the gates
Of Grief, prepared to don
Its radiancy of raiment once again,
When the low word is spoken,
And the chill charm is broken,
And the earth hearkens, and the ears of men!

ON A BUST OF LINCOLN

THIS was a man of mighty mould
  Who walked erewhile our earthly ways,
Fashioned as leaders were of old
  In the heroic days!

Mark how austere the rugged height
  Of brow — a will not wrought to bend!
Yet in the eyes behold the light
  That made the foe a friend!

Sagacious he beyond the test
  Of quibbling schools that praise or ban;
Supreme in all the broadest, best,
  We hail American.

When bronze is but as ash to flame,
  And marble but as wind-blown chaff,
Still shall the luster of his name
  Stand as his cenotaph!

MUSIC

THERE is an organ in my elm,
A harp within my maple tree;
And Maestro Wind from each compels
An equal harmony; —

At morning a sonata clear,
A symphony superb at noon;
And with the soft descent of eve
A pure and pensive tune.

What need have I in crowded towns
To seek for grand orchestral scores,
When daily through my casement drift
These airs of out-of-doors!

I WALK DARKLY

I WALK darkly down the day,
  Sanguine, and yet never sure
If the noon's abundant ray
  In its brightness shall endure;
Brooding calm or crying storm,
  Sunrise glory, sunset splendor,
Beauty in each shifting form,
  Grave or tender, —
Through them, time of frost or flower,
Conscious every orbèd hour,
    I walk darkly.

I walk darkly down the night,
  Slave to marvel, questioning
If the moon's ethereal light
  Be not some dream-builded thing;
Under star on swirling star,
  Meteor dust and comet's fire,
Vaults of purple faint and far
  Where expire
Tiny wavering flecks of flame,
Atom-points without a name,
    I walk darkly.

I WALK DARKLY

I walk darkly; peace or stress,
  Crest of joy or depth of woe,
I may grope and I may guess,
  Fancy, and yet never know.
Just the husk of truth I grip, —
  Heapèd wisdom of the ages,
Learning's mightiest fellowship,
  Saints and sages, —
In despite of each and all,
What am I but folly's thrall
    Who walk darkly?

SEA MARVELS

This morning more mysterious seems the sea
Than yesterday when, with reverberant roar,
It charged upon the beaches, and the sky
Above it shimmered cloudless. Now the waves
Lap languorously along the foamless sand,
And all the far horizon swims in mist.
Out of this murk, across this oily sweep,
Might lost armadas grandly sail to shore;
Jason might oar on Argo, or the stern
Surge-wanderer from Ithaca's bleak isle
Break on the sight, or Viking prows appear,
And still not waken wonder. Aye, the sound
Of siren singing might drift o'er the main,
And yet not fall upon amazèd ears!

The soul is ripe for marvels. Oh, great deep,
Give up your host of stately presences,
Adventurers and sea-heroes of old time,
And let them pass before us down the day
In proud procession, so that we who hear
Dull bells mark off the uneventful hours
May glimpse the bygone bravery of the world
Now moiling in its multitudinous marts,
Forgetful of fair faith and high resolve
In the inglorious grapple after gold!

THE COUNT OF MIRANDEL

Said the Count of Mirandel,
"If it's truth that the Fathers tell,
(And who would question a priest?)
I am just as sure of Hell
As the Bishop is of his feast
When the long lean Lent has ceased.
So, for a little leaven,
To ease my bed in Hell
I must filch somewhat of Heaven!"

At the mass he would not bow,
The Count of Mirandel;
And he stood with lifted brow
At the raising of the Host;
So the wrathful Bishop swore
By the Rood and the Holy Ghost,
And all of the saints as well,
He would brook the mien no more
Of the Count of Mirandel.

He was the doughtiest blade
That dwelt at the Bishop's court;
And you could not say his forte
Was the sword-thrust, or the dance,
Or the couching of a lance,

Or the witching way he played
The lute, or sang, or yet
The manner in which he made
Ballade and chansonette;
For he did them all so well
Each seemed the veriest sport
To the Count of Mirandel.

One deathless creed he had,
The passionate creed of Love;
And the shining text thereof
Was the Bishop's flower-like niece,
The Demoiselle Avice.
And, forsooth, his heart was sad
If the round of a day went by
When he might not feel the spell
Of the love-light of her eye;
And she! — no tongue can tell
How she answered sigh for sigh
To the Count of Mirandel.

Now into the Bishop's brain
There had drifted never a gleam
Of the love that bound these twain,
Or their golden summer dream
Had been closed by a dungeon-cell
Long, long before for the swain, —
For the Count of Mirandel.

THE COUNT OF MIRANDEL

It chanced on the very day
When the angry Bishop swore
That the count, with his scoffing way,
Should darken his court no more
(Despite his pressing needs
Of a man of fearless deeds,)
Gossip, the prying dame,
To the Bishop's chamber came;
And if for the youth before
It had boded far from well,
Faith, now there was danger sore
For the Count of Mirandel!

Danger! — it was no bar,
For he loved it next to Love!
He scented it afar
As the questing hawk the dove.
He could gaze upon its face
With a suave and steady smile;
He could meet it with a grace
That was cloak to a subtle wile.
He looked upon it now,
And his laugh rang like a bell;
There was no cloud on the brow
Of the Count of Mirandel!

There came grim guards to his room,
With halberd and helmet-plume;

"In the Bishop's name!" they cried,
And entered. Naught but gloom,
And the casement open wide!
There was scurrying to and fro,
Clamor and torchlight's glow,
And the Bishop raged, — "My niece,
The Demoiselle Avice,
Bid her be brought below;
She shall answer — mark me well! —
For this monstrous, mad caprice,
For this Count of Mirandel!"

Fate laughs at kings, 't is said,
And it laughs at Bishops, too!
To the roof-tree's very lead
The women, a trembling crew,
Searched all of the palace through;
But they found no hair of the head
Of the flower-fair Demoiselle;
And they sought the Bishop dread —
(There was nothing else to do,
Though they shook as under a spell!)
"We fear, your Grace, she has fled
With the Count of Mirandel!"

Said the Count of Mirandel,
Sitting within his tower,
To the lovely Demoiselle,

At the shut of the sunset hour,
"They had doomed my soul, Ma Belle,
(They who wield the rod,
So they deem, of the great Lord God!)
So, for a little leaven,
To ease my path to Hell,
I have filched somewhat of Heaven!"

THE SLEEPER

Above the cloistral valley,
  Above the druid rill,
There lies a quiet sleeper
  Upon a lonely hill.

All the long days of summer
  The low winds whisper by,
And the soft voices of the leaves
  Make murmurous reply.

All the long eves of autumn
  The loving shadows mass
Round this sequestered slumbering-place
  Beneath the cool hill grass.

All the long nights of winter
  The white drifts heap and heap
To form a fleecy coverlet
  Above the dreamer's sleep.

All the long morns of springtime
  The tear-drops of the dew
Gleam in the violets' tender eyes
  As if the blossoms knew.

THE SLEEPER

Ah, who would break the rapture
  Brooding and sweet and still,
The great peace of the sleeper
  Upon the lonely hill!

THE BRIMMED CUP

WHATE'ER come after
To-day I'll live with laughter, —
Brook-mirth, bird-joyance, and the buoyant glee
Of the impassioned sea;
Yea, and the quiet joy
Grasses employ;
And every flower,
And each abundant shower;
The ecstasy, the madness,
The primal gladness,
Hid at the roots of trees;
Rapture of bees,
The exuberance of the breeze, —
All these, whate'er come after!
O just to-day to live to the full with laughter!

THE GRAY INN

And at the last he came to a gray inn,
About which all was gray,
E'en to the sky that overhung the day;
And though in time long lapsed it might have been
Bedecked with tavern gauds, naught now it bore
Above the shambling door
Saving a creaky sign,
Whereon the storm had blurred each limnèd line.
The portal hung a-cringe,
Belike to fall from off its one bruised hinge;
And on the deep-set casement's leaded panes
The spiders wove their geometric skeins.
Hot weariness was on him, — he must rest;
And though he deemed to find no other guest,
No comradeship, within
The ghostly grayness of that somber inn,
Lo, as he crossed the lintel he beheld,
In the packed gloom
Of the low-raftered room,
One from whose eyes the mysteries of eld
Shone in lack-luster wise!
And oh, the unfathomable strangeness of those eyes!
From boot to drooping plume
Gray-garmented was he, and his still face

Was like the wan sea when the banked clouds chase
Above it through the winter's iron skies.
One lean hand held a box of shaken dice,
And in a trice
This grim and gray one cried, "Come, throw with me!
Long have I waited thee."
And he, late-entered, answered, "Naught have I
To wager!" And the gray one made reply,
"Thou hast thy soul, and shouldst thou cast and win,
Lo, all the hoarded treasure of this inn!"
They gripped and cast, but, ere he saw which won,
The sleeper stirred and woke, — the dream was done!
Within his breast there throbbed a stabbing sting:
That day, for wealth, and what its trappings bring,
He knew his hand would do an evil thing.

NIGHT

Take me, night, unto thy breast!
To my lips the cup of rest,
Cool with dews, be pressed!

Drift me down unrippled streams
Under star-beams and moon-beams!
Mantle me with dreams!

Then in caverns of delight,
Far beyond all mortal sight,
Lose me, lose me, night!

THE DREAMER

THROUGHOUT his span of argent days
From birth to death, — a narrow zone, —
He wanders by untrodden ways,
Alone, yet not alone.

For ariel fancy moulds him mirth,
A slave to work his lightest whim;
And every vagrant wind of earth
Is company for him.

He sees a brother in the star
Set on the evening's violet verge,
And like his own the pulse-beats are
In the deep ocean surge.

He finds a fellow in the tree
Reliant in its thews of power,
And, rival of the lover bee,
He woos the lady flower.

He from the poet brook beguiles
The secret of its clearest rhyme,
And year on shortening year he smiles
In the hard face of Time.

So when he slips from earth at last,
  This alien in the clay, it seems
As though from bondage he had passed
  To fairer, freer dreams.

MY HOPES

My hopes are all like argent strands
Transmuted by a magic moon;
My hopes are all like shining sands
Some distant Eldorado knows;
I gather them within my hands,
Their wondrous gleams and glows.

I gather them within my hands,
To me my life's most precious part,
The argent strands, the shining sands,
And hold them to my heart.

A TRAVELER

Into the dusk and snow
  One fared on yesterday;
No man of us may know
  By what mysterious way.

He had been comrade long;
  We fain would hold him still;
But, though our will be strong,
  There is a stronger Will.

Beyond the solemn night
  He will find morning-dream, —
The summer's kindling light
  Beyond the snow's chill gleam.

The clear, unfaltering eye,
  The inalienable soul,
The calm, high energy, —
  They will not fail the goal!

Large will be our content
  If it be ours to go
One day the path he went
  Into the dusk and snow

COWSLIP-GOLD

Rising from the murk and mould,
What a wealth of cowslip-gold!
Just as if the noon had sown,
  Affluent, its ingots there;
Just as if the sun had thrown
Blazing jewels from its zone,
  Radiantly fair.

This my precious Ophir is;
This Golconda's treasuries;
Coins of unsurpassèd dye,
  Mine to have and mine to hold!
Croesus counts his coffers; I,
Underneath the open sky,
  Count my cowslip-gold!

THE HARVEST

CHANT the harvest song of the brawny reapers,
Bare arms bronzed, with muscles astrain and gnarlèd,
Like the oak boughs tossed by the winds of winter
Hoarse in their triumph!

Chant the scythe, its gleam in the golden windrows
Where the corn-flower shines with its morning sapphire
When the wheat is ripe for the wain in waiting, —
Ripe for the gleaners!

Sing surcease from toil in the long sweet shadows,
Doves that coo and murmur of loving voices,
All the large content in the dreams that gather
After the harvest!

FLIGHT

Tell me where goes
The wraith that was the rose,
Or lily, dight
With delicate delight!

Tell me where flies
The gold of morning skies,
The radiant dream
Hid in the sunset beam;

And I will say
Whither life slips away
Into the dusk,
Leaving an ashen husk!

POPPIES

Crimson poppies, bright as the crimson morning,
Bright as torches lit by the fires of sunset,
When I see you swinging like radiant censers
Under the wind's touch —

Then my spirit, swift as the wind, is wafted
O'er the sea-foam, over the waves that welter,
Till I look again on the plain Esdrælon,
Look on the poppies

Swaying, surge on surge, to the mountain bases
Where, with walls of white and with domes that dazzle,
Nazareth nestles, girt by its silvery olives,
Sunk as in slumber.

Yet I know the song of the desert minstrel,
Haunting, weird, is heard in the narrow highways,
And around the well of the Virgin Mary
Gather the maidens,

Low-voiced, slender, jars upon head and shoulder; —
How it all comes back with the flame of poppies
Softly swaying, swinging like radiant censers
Under the wind's touch!

THE JESSAMINE BOWER

I KNOW a bower where the jessamine blows,
Far in the forest's remotest repose;
If once the eyes have beholden the golden
Chalices swinging, farewell to the rose!

Just at the bloom-burst of dawn is the hour
God must have fashioned the delicate flower,
Wrought it of sunlight and thrilled it and filled it
With a beguiling aroma for dower.

Here hath the air an enchantment that seems
Borne from the bourn of desire and of dreams, —
Borne from the bourn of youth's longing where
thronging
Dwell all love's glories and glamours and gleams.

Here doth the palm-plume o'er-droop and the pine;
Here doth the wild-grape distil its dark wine;
Here the chameleon, gliding and hiding,
Changes its hues in the shade and the shine.

Luring the lights are that falter and fail, —
Beryl and amber and amethyst pale
Splashes of radiant splendor, and tender
Tints as when twilight is deep in a dale.

THE JESSAMINE BOWER

By no bold bees are the stillnesses stirred;
Scarce is there bubble of song from a bird,
  Save for the turtle-dove's cooing and wooing, —
Rapture without an articulate word.

Sway on, oh, censers of bloom and of balm!
Sweeten the virginal cloisters of calm!
  Be there one spot lovely, lonely, where only
Peace is the priestess and silence the psalm!

THE OLD YEAR TO THE NEW

The snows of death are drifting deep,
And I have nothing left to gain,
Save the long legacy of sleep
Beyond the reach of joy or pain.

But you, the lithe and strong of thew, —
For you the onward-luring star,
The splendors of the sun, — for you
Youth's ardors that eternal are;

To note the spring's ecstatic stir,
The faint red maple-buds unclose;
To be the violet's worshiper,
And play the wooer to the rose;

To watch the swallow, swift of wing,
Soaring across the sky's blue nave;
To hear the minstrel oriole sing,
A rapture in each golden stave;

To know love's sweet companionship
Along the wonder-haloed height;
To press unto the eager lip
The purple fruitage of delight.

THE OLD YEAR TO THE NEW

Yours the glad sowing of the grain,
  The harvest happiness to reap;
While I have nothing left to gain,
  Save the long legacy of sleep!

DAFFODIL GOLD

Gold of the daffodil, drawn
Out of the cup of the dawn,
Gold of the daffodil, born
In the bright mines of the morn,
Gold of the daffodil, spun
On the warm loom of the sun,
Flood through my spirit, and smite
Me with thine orient light!
I that am pallid and poor,
Wasted by winter away,
Be thou my succor and cure!
Quicken my questioning clay!
That I may rouse me and sing,
Touch thou my pulses with Spring!

JUST AT THE MOONRISE

Sing the rush and roar of the deep-sea breakers,
Sing their sob and moan in the purple twilight,
When they roll and plunge on the barren beaches
Just at the moonrise!

Sing the tossing spray and the fleeting spindrift;
Gulls that dip and dart upon wings of wonder;
Ships that fade like dreams on the far horizon
Just at the moonrise!

Sing of hearts that wait in the quiet haven,
Watch and wait for sight of the homing seamen,
Sing of love and pain and of poignant yearning
Just at the moonrise!

WIND OF THE MOOR

Wind of the moor, breath of the vast free reaches,
What is the mutable voice wherewith you cry?
I listen and listen again, and I dream your speech is
Freighted with whisper of lips from the days gone by.

Ever at dawn of the day, or when sunsets darken,
The murmur comes of strange, inscrutable things;
And methinks that I often catch, what time I hearken,
The rustle of feet and the beating of unseen wings.

Wind of the moor, you are eldritch, aye, you are eerie!
For all of the pain of the past can you find no cure?
Rest for a little space, for my heart is weary,
And would fain forget — forget, oh, wind of the moor!

THE KING OF DREAMS

Some must delve when the dawn is nigh;
Some must toil when the noonday beams;
But when night comes, and the soft winds sigh,
Every man is a King of Dreams!

One must plod while another must ply
At plough or loom till the sunset streams,
But when night comes, and the moon rides high,
Every man is a King of Dreams!

One is slave to a master's cry,
Another serf to a despot seems,
But when night comes, and the discords die,
Every man is a King of Dreams!

This you may sell and that may buy,
And this you may barter for gold that gleams,
But there's one domain that is fixed for aye, —
Every man is a King of Dreams!

JOY AND SORROW

SHALL we let Joy go by,
He of the kindling eye?
Nay, comrade, nay!
But lo, he wends his uncompanioned way!

Shall we bid Sorrow bide,
He that is mournful-eyed?
Nay, comrade, nay!
But lo, he lingers, bidden not to stay!

SONG OF THE MORNING STARS

THROUGH the abysses of the sky
Surge upon surge the years sweep by,
Yet still our spheral voices chime,
For we are over-lords of Time.

We view all secrets face to face, —
The deep solemnities of space,
The rayless voids of outer sea,
The courts of God's eternity.

It is our bliss to be above
All passions save eternal Love,
And this our choral lips rehearse
Throughout the listening universe.

So shall the centuries wax and wane
Till Song and Love alone remain,
And all shall join our deathless chime,
Like us the over-lords of Time.

A SUNSET BREEZE

All of the livelong day there was scarcely a rustle of leaves,
The writhing river burned like a molten serpent of fire;
The reaper dropped his scythe, and the binder fled from his sheaves,
And a breeze on the throbbing brow was the world's supreme desire.

When the disk of the sun dipped down there sprang from out of the west
A sudden wafture of wind that crinkled the unmown grain;
The kine were glad in the field, and the bird was glad on the nest,
And the heart of the mother leaped that her prayer was not in vain.

For the sunset breeze stole in with healing upon its breath,
Winnowed the fevered air with a single sweetening sweep;
Out of the back-swung door slipped the pallid angel of death,
And lo, as the mother knelt, the baby smiled in its sleep!

THE SOWER

Over the sunset lands
A shadowy sower passed,
A scrip within his hands
Wherefrom the seed he cast.

Until the dusk grew deep
He scattered again and again;
It was the sower, sleep,
Sowing the dreams of men!

THE VOICE

I HEAR it in the twilight; I catch it in the dawn,
When all the eastern skyline is laced with rose and fawn;
It cries me in the noonday amid the cold or heat;
It shouts me in the forest; it hails me in the street;
I hark its sudden bidding on many an upland track;
Out of the days departed it summons me — "Come back!"

With sweet and tender tremors the heart o' me it thrills;
I cast aside old sorrows; I rise above old ills;
Whate'er the goal I'm seeking, I need nor spur nor goad;
I am a gypsy vagrant footing a rainbow road;
The tide about me beating leaps swift from ebb to flood,
And re-awakened Aprils go singing through my blood.

Throughout the scheme of being I find nor fleck nor flaw;
The vivid joy of living, that is my only law;
It may be but a moment the rapture-dream endures,
And yet, — ah, shining marvel! — what weariness it cures!

THE VOICE

O Voice of Youth, O echo from Time's far-trodden
track,
Out of the days departed still call to me "Come
back!"

THE CLIMBING ROAD

WHERE do you go, oh, climbing road, mounting, mounting ever?
"I go," it seems to answer back, "to seek the great endeavor!"

Be mine your way, oh, climbing road, mounting, mounting ever,
For still my heart within me cries to seek the great endeavor!

THE DANCE OF THE HOURS

We are the hours of dawn; ah, featly, featly,
We foot it to the music of the sun!
Ever before us, rapturously, fleetly,
Hand linked in hand the nimble moments run.

We are the hours of noon; ah, lightly, lightly,
We tread as to some throbbing golden chord!
Not with more graceful motion, nor more sprightly,
Flit butterflies above the summer sward.

We are the hours of eve; ah, slowly, slowly,
We move as seem the rhythmic spheres to sway!
The violet light about our path is holy,
As round the urn of beauty passed away.

We are the hours of night, the fair, the stately,
Who wear the stars as maidens woven flowers;
How quietly, serenely and sedately
Do we complete the measure of the hours!

STORMY PETRELS

When down the gray Atlantic drives the flaw,
And the mad winds alternate shout and wail,
When angry billows move the soul to awe,
These birds out-ride the gale.

One with the wave, one with the lash of rain,
One with the wildest gust that flings the foam,
These wingèd wanderers of the outer main
Make the great deep their home.

For us the love of earth, the sunshine bright,
Voices of friends about the ingle warm;
For them the unfathomable gulfs of night,
The clarion lips of storm!

LITTLE THINGS

It is the little things
Bring happiness; — the winnow of soft wings
Beneath the bright undrooping of the dawn;
A kiss, a smile; sunlight upon the lawn;
A tender word
Breathed in the twilight hush; a rose-leaf stirred
To deeper crimson when the noon is bland;
A hand-wave, or the touching of a hand;
A glint of moonlight: notes from plaintive strings; —
It is the little things!

ENDEAVOR

We saw him from our guarded wall
  Tilt boldy at the sun,
And watched with awe his splendid fall
  To blind oblivion.

Then sudden flashed the thought on us,
  We who his lot had shared, —
Better to fail like Icarus
  Than never to have dared!

IN A SNOW STORM

THE evanescent wonder of the snow
Is round about us, and as in a cloud, —
A vestiture inviolate, — we walk.
Earth seems bereft of song and shorn of sun,
A cloistral world. Even the lyric throb
Of the rapt brook is like a heart-beat faint.
The wood, white architrave on architrave,
Is as a temple where the lips of prayer
Tremble upon the verge of utterance.
Hush! — in the soul of this great gulf of sleep,
This void abysmal, may we not divine
The Inscrutable Presence, clothed about with dreams,
The Immaculate Vision that is death yet life,
For out of death comes life; — the twain are one!

WHEN I GO HOME

WHEN I go home,
  Day's labor done,
Through the cool gloam
  At set of sun,
How sweet the rest
  That toil has won
On love's warm breast
  At set of sun!

When I go home,
  Life's labor done,
No more to roam
  At rise of sun,
How sweet the rest,
  The long race run,
On earth's warm breast
  From sun to sun!

A SUPPLICATION

LORD, we whose sturdy sires
Lit sacrificial fires
  Upon thine altars in the days of old,
Deeming to found a state
That should be nobly great,
To liberty and honor consecrate,
  Turn Thou our eyes from the red glamour — Gold!

Lord, we whose forbears bled
Where youth and valor led,
  In the dark face of danger ever bold,
Daring to dream the dream
Of freedom till its beam
Flashed on their vision like a dawning gleam,
  Turn Thou our hearts from the false glamour —
    Gold!

Lord, ere some whelming hour
Grip with its fatal power,
  And all our land's fair fabric we behold
Shattered as shards, sore spent,
Dismembered, impotent,
As ruinous as is a garment rent,
  Turn Thou our souls from the dread glamour —
    Gold!

THE VOYAGE OF VERRAZANO
(1524)

Verrazano, Verrazano, child of Arno's golden vale,
Wooer of life's great adventure, master of the streaming sail,
O'er the chartless seas of silence from a fellow voyager, hail!

I can view you as the morning lit your peak with windy flame,
On the day the West beguiled you with the glamour of its name,
When the dauntless Dolphin ventured on the peril-path of Fame!

Osprey-like above the spindrift, through your brain fair dreams had play,
Flushed with all the hues of sunset, iridescent as the spray,
Visions of the wonder-islands and the treasures of Cathay.

Verrazano, Verrazano, I can mark the heavy hours, —
Striding winds upon the waters, and tumultuous tropic showers,

And the strange bright stars at midnight, ere you
neared the Land of Flowers.

I can picture its allurement, — bloom as of eternal
spring,
Attar from the jasmine blossoms in the pines and
palms aswing,
What it meant to worn sea-rovers spent with weary
wandering!

But here oped no halcyon haven, this was not the far-
sought goal,
Though it might be hung with garlands like a radiant
aureole;
Here was not the crown's attainment for a virile sea-
man soul!

Verrazano, Verrazano, then it was the North beguiled
With the magic of its trumpets blowing loud and
blowing wild;
And you listened to its summons like an outcast long
exiled.

In the purple drift of twilight dappled dune and wood
slipped by;
Reedy cove and barren headland rocked beneath a
cloud-tossed sky;
While the taut breeze through the cordage chanted
sagas clear and high.

Cliffs that bore no blazing beacons save the flare of
savage flames,
Capes that ne'er had heard a greeting save the sea-
mew's shrill acclaims,
How you cried them salutation with your sweet Italian
names!

Verrazano, Verrazano, — Chesapeake and Delaware,
They to you were soft Santanna linked with Palamsina
fair;
Then you sighted San Germano in the crimson even-
ing air.

San Germano! — our Manhattan, virginal with vernal
shores,
Its incomparable harbor opening as do silvern doors
Swinging to the sound of music that from blended
viols pours.

While in liquid under-ether at repose your anchor
hung,
And the thrush's vesper anthems from the slopes
about you rung,
Did you breast the tides of slumber amid dreams that
closed and clung?

Verrazano, Verrazano, in the mazes of that night
Did some prophecy enfold you, did some prescience
clothe your sight

With to-day's still-growing marvels, height upon
triumphant height?

Pendant Babylonian gardens, Ninevean temples tall,
Climbing Carthagenian ramparts, Susan dome and
Tyrian wall,
All that Rome revealed of splendor — had not this
majestic thrall! —

Had not this imperious import; — Commerce in
exultant sway;
Affluence of every nation moored within one matchless
bay;
From the calyx of the ages a miraculous Cathay!

Yours, by virtue of brave questing, yours, by right of
primal law,
The discoverer's chrism of glory, that omnipotence of
awe
Such as Moses knew on Pisgah when he raised his eyes
— and saw!

Verrazano, Verrazano, howsoe'er you trim your sail,
Seeking still the great adventure far beyond our mortal
pale,
O'er the chartless seas of silence from a fellow voyager,
hail!

BROOKLYN BRIDGE

I DREAM the Titans came by night
  And stretched this most majestic span;
Surely such symmetry, such height,
Such girder-grip, such cable-might,
  Were never joined by man!

Or was it out of nothing brought
  By some Aladdin's lamp or ring?
Or through some stainless magic wrought,
This masterly-embodied thought,
  This super-human thing?

THE DWELLING

I MAY not dwell where olives shake
Their silver o'er the silver lake,
  Nor where the citron sheds its snow
  At dawning or at sunset-glow,
And nightingales their music make!

I may not dwell where palm-trees set
Against the sky their silhouette,
  Nor where the silences are filled
  With attars cunningly distilled
Of blended rose and mignonette!

What matters it where'er it be
My dwelling lies, by land or sea,
  If, while the days of life slip past
  Toward the great ocean, vague and vast,
I may but dwell with Memory!

YULE AT THENGELFOR

It was Yule at Thengelfor, —
The sharp white tide of Yule;
And the mailèd Thanes of War,
Bred in the fiery school
Of the devotees of Thor,
Flung into the council-hall
With sneer and clamorous call
At the calm-browed Thanes of Peace
Who worshiped without cease, —
Bending in prayer the knee
To the One of Galilee
Who died, as they said, for all.

Each man stood in his place
That sharp white noon of Yule,
And the War-Thanes hooted, "fool!"
And "coward!" and "craven knave!"
And they flashed, each one, a glaive
In every Peace-Thane's face.
But the Peace-Thanes were not cowed,
Smiling their quiet smile
At the flaunts and threats and jeers
Roaring about their ears;
And they held them poised and proud

Till, after a breathing while,
The tumult died like the sea
Subsiding sullenly
Around the breast of an isle
Set at the last fiord's verge,
Fronting the western surge.

Then into the council-hall
Where Peace confronted War, —
Where Christ confronted Thor, —
Dauntless, willowy, tall,
Came a maid of Thengelfor, —
The Princess! Ah, how fair
Was the sunrise-sheen of her hair,
More wondrous to behold
Than her coronet of gold!
And she paused between them there,
As white as the Yule was white,
Till a hush fell on the air
Like the hush of the middle night.
And she said, "What stand ye for?"
To the mailèd Thanes of War;
And they shouted shrill, "For Thor,
And the kingdom's olden might!"
Then she turned her, level-eyed,
To the Peace-Thanes. "Ye?" she cried;
As in one voice they replied,
"For Christ, and the rule of right!"

"Thor and the war and might!"
Thus she mused for a space;
"Christ and peace and the right!"
And a glory mantled her face.
"Better the right than might,
Ye valiant Thanes of War!
Blood now the Yule is white?
Nay, 't were a grievous sight! —
Better the Christ than Thor!"

And ever and evermore
By the Baltic's rugged shore,
In the halls of Thengelfor,
Right not might is the rule,
The Christ and not sanguine Thor
At the sharp white tide of Yule!

WATER-SPRITES

Over the hill-slopes and down through the hollows
The silver-clad water-sprites rally and run;
As fleet are their feet as the wings of the swallows,
And whither they fare there's a gladness that follows
As fresh and as bright and as blithe as the sun.

And lo, at their touch there awakens, there kindles,
A subtle, pervasive, unnamable thing!
The blight upon beauty, like darkness it dwindles,
For the workers of wonder are whirling their spindles,
And fingers are lithe on the loom of the Spring.

MARATHON

And this is Marathon! — this sweep of plain
Austere and treeless! yet 't is glorious ground,
Albeit naught save one unfeatured mound
Stands monument to the undaunted slain;
But at the sight the old heroic strain
Moves in the breast as at some martial sound;
Again the victor Greeks are glory-crowned,
The Persian hordes back-driven to the main!

E'en gnawing Time, with his insatiate greed,
Wears not the splendor of some names away,
But, star-like, they endure, undimmed and fair;
And so with Marathon, though the spot to-day
Is but a wilderness of grass and reed
Lying at peace beneath the Attic air.

CRICKET

Cricket, chirring in the autumn twilight,
Little kinsman,
I, like you, the unknown path must follow
Into darkness, —
One day into darkness.
Would I might, with your ecstatic buoyance,
Fare forth singing!

THE CLOSED ROOM

In the marvelous House of Life
Each year is a closèd room;
It is filled with peace and strife;
It is packed with glow and gloom.

There are hopes in the hues of dream;
There are cares in their grim array;
There are pleasures that glint and gleam;
And sorrows in drugget gray.

For some, with his infinite grace,
Love waits when the portal jars;
For some, with his sphinx-like face,
Death stands when the door unbars.

Some back from the threshold shrink,
As loath from the past to part;
But the most plunge over the brink
With never a fear at heart.

Then silent closes the door
At the sound of the last old chime,
And the key — Forevermore —
Is turned by the keeper — Time!

FIESOLE

Say not that Arno's vale is fair,
And Florence fair and good to see,
Until from far Fiesole
You view them, bright through cloudless air!

What skies are like Italian skies?
Where do the olive and the vine
With larger wealth of fruitage shine
Than here, beneath the ravished eyes!

Love you not Arno's tawny gold?
Feel you not somehow near akin
To Florence, with her woe and sin,
And all the deeds she wrought of old?

How great her gifts! Her open heart
Has yielded much to bless mankind,
And in her bosom still we find
A precious treasure-house of art.

And thou, Fiesole, and thou,
O'er all her glory leaning down,
With thy serene monastic crown,
And morning on thine ancient brow,

Thou art her guardian, smiling sweet
  Upon her, as upon a child
  A mother fond has ever smiled,
Her child at play about her feet!

Keep watchful ward above her still
  With prescience of the vast To-be!
  Look down the years, Fiesole,
From off thy spirit-haunted hill!

LONELINESS

I HAVE known loneliness; — the mountain peak
Scarred by the lightnings, and communicant
With searing suns and the pale lips of stars;
The gaping canyon riven deep in earth
As with titanic cleavage; the gray sea,
Sunless and sad, unswept by any sail;
The desert, void from marge to shimmering marge,
Only a vulture veering in the vault;
The roaring street, its jostling myriads,
And yet no face the fond face of a friend;
But none of these so poignantly has pierced
My heart, as has one small deserted room
Where she was wont to sit within whose eyes
Love was perpetual guest, — the little room
(Oh, blinding tears!) whereto she comes no more.

DIRGE FOR A SAILOR

Beyond the bourns of time and sleep,
  Beyond the sway of tides,
A voyager o'er death's darksome deep,
  His ship at anchor rides.

He who from boyhood never knew
  A garden save the foam,
Whose only rooftree was the blue,
  At last has found a home.

And what more fit than that the wave
  He loved through life to stem
Should sing above his green sea grave
  This sailor's requiem!

MAGGIORE

Friend, rest awhile upon thy glistening oars,
And let us drift and dream
Of naught beyond these mountain-bordered shores
That in the sunlight gleam!

Away, all memory of life's storm and stress,
All thought of days to be!
Hail, holy calm and sweet forgetfulness,
Belovèd Italy!

In tiny sapphire ripples round us break
The wavelets one by one,
Upon the bosom of the fairest lake
That sees the shining sun.

Italian breezes, languorous and low,
Around us steal and sigh;
From peak to peak, suffused with amber glow,
Spans the Italian sky.

If paradise there be on earthly shores,
Here is its heavenly gleam;
Then, friend, rest idly on thy dipping oars
And let us drift and dream!

THE MIST AND THE SEA

The mist crept in from the sea
  Out of the void and the vast;
And it bore the silver rain
A shimmering guest in its train,
And many a murmuring strain
  Of the ships that sailed in the past;
Soft as sleep's footfalls be
The mist crept in from the sea.

The mist crept in from the sea
  And folded the length of the shore
In the clasp of its mothering arms
As though it would shield from harms;
And lulled were the loud alarms,
  And lost was the rage and roar
Of the surge, so soothingly
The mist crept in from the sea.

The mist crept in from the sea,
  White, impalpable, strange;
Full of the wafture of wings,
Of eerie and eldritch things,
Of visions and vanishings
  Ever in shift and change;

THE MIST AND THE SEA

Silently, hauntingly,
The mist crept in from the sea.

The mist crept in from the sea,
  And bode for a space, and then
It heard the imperious call
Of the deep, transcending all,
And it knew itself as the thrall
  Of the world-old master of men,
So, still as the dreams that flee,
The mist crept back to the sea.

THE PILLOW

Out of the earth have I made me a pillow,
  Smoothed it and mossed it and grassed it well over;
Under the tremulous leaves of the willow,
Lo, it is there I have made me a pillow,
  Down where the rillet runs by like a rover,
  And bees quaff deep from the sweet white clover!

Sooth, there is much both to learn and to listen to, —
  Twitter of wren and the warble of thrushes!
Bosom and throat how they quiver and glisten, too!
Mellower music nowhere will you listen to;
  Trills that are golden and silvery gushes,
  And the brook meanwhile making love to the rushes.

Day-time or night-time, noon-time or moon-time,
  Ever there's something to lure me and hold me;
You know the charm that there is in the Junetime!
(Day-time or night-time, noon-time or moon-time!)
  Such is the magic that seems to enfold me,
  Play on my spirit, re-fashion, re-mould me.

Bough-sway above me, and reed-sway below me,
  And gentle leaf-laughter around and about me;

THE PILLOW

Crickets, cicadas and katydids know me;
Tinkles and trebles above and below me!
  Just the old earth-joy the clear voices shout me;
  If there is happier haven I doubt me!

Yea, on the breast of the loving all-mother,
  Lo, it is there I a pillow have made me!
Soothe can she, lull can she, more than another, —
She, the all-bountiful, beautiful mother!
  Oh, that her peace, with its healing, may aid me,
  When, at the last, on her breast they have laid me!

I LEAN SUNWARD

I LEAN sunward all the year, —
Copses green or copses sere,
Time of rose or time of rime,
Tree-toad chirp or cricket-chime!

I lean sunward; in my veins
Ichor runs and ardor reigns,
Lifting me, upon my course,
Toward light's elemental source.

I lean sunward; may there be
Something that shall buoyance me,
When life's varied race be run,
To the Light behind the sun!

THE THRALL

Aloof, I heard
The rise and dip note of the oven-bird,
Word upon buoyant word,
Rapt music, blithe as is the blossoming
Of frail hepaticas, rills dropped a-wing,
Or from a bough a-swing
In the warm lyric south-wind. Little leaves
Rippled in soft green laughter. Belted thieves,
Bent upon honey-plunder, made fleet chase
From bloom to bloom, —
The cloud-white trillium and squirrel's-corn,
The seal-o'-Solomon, golden as the morn, —
With breezy boom,
Or low and dreamy bass.
Then swift I said,
Of all earth's loveliness enamorèd,
"Here is my place!
Here will I linger and gain lasting grace
From all this sweet renewal, — the old lure
Of youth and joy! I that am spent and poor
Will straight grow rich and hale;
And there shall naught avail
To filch from me my wealth;

No creeping stealth
Shall grasp it in the watches of the night!"
Hence I abide.
Oh, ye who would win healing, heart-delight,
Come ye and look and list, revivified!
Slough thy gray wintry mood!
Clasp hands with life renewed!
Bird-voice, brook-babble, blossom-murmurs, kind
Touch of the whispering wind,
Grass-crinkle, bud-unfolding, each and all,
Have been, and are, and will be mine uplifting.
Earth hath no vernal entity so small,
So subtle, or so shifting,
It doth not hold me thrall!

THE SEEKERS

FRIEND, I pray thee, who be they
That do roam adown the day
With such lorn and lifeless stride,
Wan of face and weary-eyed?
Ho, ye wanderers, pinched and pale,
On what long unbeaten trail
Go ye? — on what unknown quest?

Thus the hapless ones confessed; —
"*Seek we east and seek we west,*
For the sacred chrism of rest!"

"Hold," the curious questioner said,
"For a space thy toilsome tread;
Haply nearer than ye dream
Is the balm ye so esteem!"
Then upon him full they turned
Eyes in whose dull embers burned
Longing, as a sleepless guest.

"*Ah,*" *they sighed,* "*then were we blessed,*
Seeking east, and seeking west,
For the sacred chrism of rest!"

"I," the questioner said, "will guide
To the bourn so sanctified;
Follow me, and ye shall see
Where the haunts of heart's-ease be!"
Wotted then the seekers well
'T was the angel Azrael,
And they bowed at his behest.

"*Aye,*" *they answered,* "*it is best!*
Seeking east, and seeking west,
We have found the chrism of rest!"

MY HESPERIDES

I HEAR the cattle low; I catch the faint sheep-bells;
I hark the robins' flute across the meadow swells;
I see the friendly boughs, boughs of the apple-trees;
They wave me kindly hands, mine own Hesperides.

Far have I fared, oh, far, by many an alien shore,
But I have come to climb the hills of home once more!
Beguiling scenes I've scanned beyond the plunging seas,
But ne'er a scene like this, mine own Hesperides!

Pomegranates I have plucked where glows the southern sun;
Yea, I have set to lip the grapes of Lebanon!
But I have found at last the only true heart's ease;
Here is the golden fruit, — mine own Hesperides!

SONG OF THE SHIPS

The great ships go a-shouldering
Along my line of shore;
The little ships like sea-gulls fly
Under the blue tent of the sky,
And some will lie a-mouldering,
Where phosphor lights are smouldering,
And sail no more, no more!

Spruce and trig
Is yon bounding brig; —
"Whither away, my master?"
"Oh, just for a bit of a jaunty trip,
From the lazy ooze of Salem slip
To where the long tides roar and rip
Round the coral keys
Of the outer seas,
And the combers cry 'disaster!'
Out and up with the topsail there!
There's plenty of God's free briny air
To crowd her a little faster!"

Ah, like a lark,
Dips yonder bark, —
Poises and dips and rises!
"Whither away?"

"To the clear blue day,
And the Lost Lagoon
Where the flame of noon
Is full of rapt surprises,
And the tropic moon,
As it swings a-swoon,
Entangles and entices!"

It's "champ! champ! champ!"
Goes the wheezy tramp,
With her funnels low and raky;
"Whither away?" — "Well, the good Lord knows
Where we'll land, if it up and blows,
For the keel is foul (that's one of our woes!)
And the screw is mighty shaky;
But we'll weather to port although it be
Under the gray-green roof of the sea,
And we'll warp to the pier
With a rouse of cheer,
Though queer be the pier and quaky!"

Like an arrowy shaft
From fore to aft
Onward urges the liner;
"Whither away?" Strong comes the hail, —
"O'er creamy crest and o'er beryl vale
To the gates of the Ultimate East we sail
Where the rose abides and the nightingale

Sits caroling — none diviner!
A myriad hopes — not a wraith of doubt! —
Throb between our decks as we hurtle out;
And the mind and the shaping hand of man,
Since the ancient surge of Time began,
Ne'er fashioned a splendor finer!"

With sparkling spar
Glides the man-o'-war,
Her great-gunned turrets towering;
"Whither away?" — "To the verge of earth
To guard the rights of the free of birth,
And give them a taste of our Yankee mirth
Wherever the foe be lowering;
And should it come to last appeal,
To the cruel chrism of fire and steel,
Be it man on bridge, in hold, at wheel,
There'll be no caitiff cowering!"

And so the ships go shouldering
Along my line of shore,
And whether they dare the fret of the Horn,
Or make for the Golden Isles of Morn,
Under the sapphire tent of sky,
Some will range back by and by,
And some will lie a-mouldering,
Where phosphor lights are smouldering,
And sail no more, no more!

A BIT OF MARBLE

This bit of polished marble, this,
  Was found where Athens proudly rears
Its temple-crowned Acropolis
  So hoar with years.

In antique time some sculptor's hand,
  Deft-turning, carved it fine and small,
A part of base or column grand,
  Or capital.

Regarding it, I mind me so
  A song should be, with ardor wrought, —
Cut in the firm Pentelic snow
  Of lofty thought!

WILD COREOPSIS

A SEA of blossoms, golden as the glow
  Of morning sunlight on a wind-rocked bay,
  Beneath the breeze of this rare autumn day
Heaves in soft undulation to and fro;
Like incense, floating o'er the marsh below,
  Come fragrant odors of the late-mown hay;
  Beyond, in harmony of green and gray,
The tapering tameracks tower in stately row.

And wading through the shimmering waves with song
  Upon his lips, a fair-haired youth I see,
    Who swinges off the saffron blossom-bells;
Back roll the years, — a melancholy throng, —
  And I behold, in sea-girt Sicily,
    Theocritus amid the asphodels!

SLEEP, THE ALMONER

Adown the voids and vastnesses of night
Haste thou to me, oh, almoner of Rest!
Come with thy fardel full of fairest dreams,
And strew them round about me, as the spring
Scatters the cloistral wake-robins in May;
For I am over-wearied, and would dwell
Only with fantasy; would droop and drowse
Lulled as with lutes; would lie on blossom-beds
Scented with savors of oblivion;
Down paradisal streams would glide 'neath sails
Tinted like golden gonfalons; would taste
Honeys more luscious than are those that ooze
From the bruised cells of Hymettean combs!
All this for gift is thine, oh, almoner!
Then speed thee on thy pinions snow-fall soft
Adown the voids and vastnesses of night!

THE BOOKSTALL

It stands in a winding street,
A quiet and restful nook,
Apart from the endless beat
Of the noisy heart of Trade.
There's never a spot more cool
Of a hot midsummer day
By the brink of a forest pool,
Or the bank of a crystal brook
In the maples' breezy shade,
Than the bookstall old and gray.

Here are precious gems of thought
That were quarried long ago,
Some in vellum bound, and wrought
With letters and lines of gold;
Here are curious rows of "calf,"
And perchance an Elzevir;
Here are countless "mos" of chaff,
And a parchment folio,
Like leaves that are cracked with cold
All puckered and brown and sere.

In every age and clime
Live the monarchs of the brain:

And the lords of prose and rhyme,
Years after the long last sleep
Has come to the kings of earth
And their names have passed away,
Rule on through death and birth;
And the thrones of their domain
Are found where the shades are deep,
In the bookstall old and gray.

THE TROOPERS

(1778)

We clattered into the village street, and up to the *Rose and Crown*,
And we roared a toast to the Tory host as we tossed his liquor down; —
"Long life to General Washington! He's a gentleman, we trow!
But death to a thing like a tyrant king, and his vassal, my great Lord Howe!"

Then we doffed the hat as down we sat, and bade him fatten the board,
And when he whimpered and wheezed and whined we gave a clank of the sword;
By his own wide hearth, 't was a matter for mirth to see him bend and cow,
This cringing thing to a tyrant king, and his vassal, my great Lord Howe!

We had ridden fast, we had ridden far, and under the stars had slept;
Out of the night for the foray-fight we into the dawn had crept;

THE TROOPERS

Long and late we had laughed at fate, we had hungered
oft, and now
'T was a goodly thing to feast like a king, and his
vassal, my great Lord Howe!

We had kissed our mothers and kissed our wives and
kissed our sweethearts true!
As a grain of sand we had held our lives in the work we
had to do;
We were "Rebels" all, proud name, God wot, because
we would not bow
Our heads to a thing like a tyrant king, and his vassal,
my great Lord Howe!

"Up now, my lads!" was the word we heard leap blithe
from the captain's tongue,
So we raised a rouse for the Tory house as out of the
door we flung;
"Long life to General Washington! He's a gentleman,
we trow!
But death to a thing like a tyrant king, and his vassal,
my great Lord Howe!"

ON A COPY OF KEATS' "ENDYMION"

Has not the glamoured season come once more,
When earth puts on her arras of soft green?
See where along the meadow rillet's shore
The wild-rose buds unfold!
Eastward the boughs with murmurous laughter lean
To warm themselves in morning's generous gold.
The foxgloves nod along the English lanes
That saw erewhile the dancing sprites of snow;
Night-long the leaf-hid nightingale complains
With such melodious woe
That Sleep, enamored of her soaring strains,
Is widely wakeful as the dim hours go.

Ope but the page — and hark, the impassioned bird
That through the hush of the be-shadowed hours
Pours in the ear of dark its melting word!
Here is as mellow song
As ever welled from pleachèd laurel bowers,
Or e'er was borne soft orient winds along;
Here may one list all ecstasies they sung,
The shepherds and the maid of Arcady,
Flower-garlanded what time the world was young; —
Pandean minstrelsy,
Low flutings from slim pipes of silver tongue
Played by the dryads on some upland lea.

And blent with these are heavenly whisperings
As faint as whitening poplars make at dawn,
Sublime suggestions of fine-fingered strings
Touched in celestial air,
And earthward through the dulling ether drawn,
Yet falling on us more than earthly fair;
The voice divine that young Endymion knew
In the cool woodland's darkmost depths by night,
When godlike ardors thrilled him through and through;
And his voice from the height
Whither, on wakening, drenched with chilly dew,
He sought the goddess in the gathering light.

But ah, what mournful memories are mine,
Song-wakened at this lavish summer-tide!
Can I forget that somber cypress line
By old Rome's ruined wall,
The lonely grave that alien grasses hide,
And the pathetic silence shrouding all?
Who would forget? Blest be the song that bears
My soul across aerial seas of space
As wingèdly as airy fancy fares!
For now that earth's worn face
The radiant glow of life's renewal wears,
Would I in reverence seek that sacred place.

There would I lay these woven shreds of rhyme
In lieu of scattered heart's-ease and the rose.

Behold how Song has triumphed over Time,
For still *his* song rings clear,
Though where the tender Roman violet grows
Deep has he slumbered many a fateful year!
If to the poet's rapt imaginings
Beauty to be wed, with love of purpose high,
Despite the cynic and his scornful flings
Song shall not fail and die,
But like the bird that up the azure springs
Still thrill the heart, still fill the listening sky!

THE WATCHERS

With eerie cadence hoots the owl;
The moon is on her silver throne;
(The lions peer, the lions prowl,
About the pillars proud or prone.)

From desert wastes an ancient song
Upon the wind drifts out and in;
(The lions they are lean and long
And sly and sinuous as sin.)

Enscrolled entablature and plinth
Are shattered or are toppled things;
(The lions search each labyrinth
Above the swathèd dust of kings.)

Here sounded once the Luxor lyre,
Or high flutes shrilled the Theban lay;
(The lions are man's fell desire
To grasp, to gain, to filch, to prey.)

Here Joy was fluent as are birds,
Or like a lissome stripling ran;
(The lions are the lying words
That undermine man's faith in man.)

Here there were warlike triumphs; here
  Of old the whole world made its mart;
(The lions are those forms of fear
  That batten upon Honor's heart.)

And shall the stature of our state
  To shards be riven thus and rent?
(The lions, greed reincarnate,
  Are evil's base embodiment.)

We can but strive, beseech, implore,
  For faith, for foresight, and for power,
Since ever, beside gate and door,
  The lions wait and watch the hour!

THE WIND IN THE BOUGHS

I HEAR the bugler Wind amid the boughs
Sounding tumultuous music, — mighty notes
Resurgent as the surf-beat of the sea;
And while the supple branches sway thereto,
As in a vision I behold great hosts
Marching beneath the sun's gold oriflamme;
Not Timur's hordes, nor Attila's long lines,
Nor the dense legions of the Corsican,
Wan specters of the illimitable past,
But living men in motley multitudes, —
Pale peoples of the North with dull, deep eyes,
And swarthy sons from lands of oil and vine.

Through thy wide gateways, oh, belovèd land,
They sweep unceasing. Is the bugler Wind,
Vociferous through his gamut of loud stops,
Prophetic of black menace? — to deaf ears
Voicing full-throated warning of the time
When his tense tones shall seem but echoes faint
Of what these tongues shall threaten? — Who can say?

A BROKEN LUTE

I AM the thing round which the aureole
Of music hung, now like an empty bowl,
Reft of the living wine that was its soul!

Lo, I am as the rose that once was red,
Its fragrance gone, its glowing petals shed;
I am the body with the spirit fled!

And yet about me like an unseen flame
That raptured mystic worshipers acclaim,
Hovers a melody that none may name,

Impalpable save to anointed ears;
Yet he who hath true divination hears
Harmonies chorded with the swinging spheres;

For naught of loveliness can vanish quite,
But lingers near us, be it sound or sight,
One with the whole, one with the infinite!

WHO GOES BY

Who goes by like the tread of armies, all that have
marched since the world began,
Hordes of the Hun and the vagrant Vandal, hosts of
Timur and Genghis Khan?

Who goes by with the voice of thunder, lilting a
triumph titan tune,
Reeling the stars in their wheeling courses, rocking
the disk of the rising moon?

Who goes by like the sound of surges heard on the
Hebridean shore,
Or where the ice-packs grind and sunder, off the verges
of Labrador?

Who goes by like the avalanches at the hands of the
sun set free?
Who goes by like the draught of forges under Ætna or
Stromboli?

Who goes by at the tide of the Lion as with the wings
of the tempest shod?
Who but the wind that is God's evangel, setting his
lips to the trump of God!

THE GREAT VOICE

I WHO have heard solemnities of sound —
The throbbing pulse of cities, the loud roar
Of ocean on sheer ledges of gaunt rock,
The chanting of innumerable winds
Around white peaks, the plunge of cataracts,
The whelm of avalanches, and, by night,
The thunder's panic breath — have come to know
What is earth's mightiest voice — the desert's voice —
Silence, that speaks with deafening tones of God.

THE ACTOR

Night after night a mimic death he died,
While sympathetic thousands wept and sighed;
But when at last he came in truth to die,
No teardrop fell from any mourner's eye.

PERPETUITY

LAST night a mighty poet passed away;
"Who now will sing our songs?" men cried at morn.
Faint hearts, fear not! Somewhere, though far away,
At that same hour another bard was born!

MARBLE

A BLANK unshapely mass but yesterday,
As void of beauty as a clod of clay;
Behold, a miracle! — for now it seems
A form to haunt the midnight of our dreams!

FANCY AND IMAGINATION

Fancy scarce wings above the mountain height
Where clouds and mists the upper ether bar;
Imagination is the eagle-flight
That in the empyrean seeks the star!

TIME

Time is as feather-footed as the snow;
So light he treads we never hear him go,
Save when we list the clock's untiring beat
Marking the swift iambics of his feet.

RAINBOW GOLD

Life is a rainbow where all colors blend;
Oft side by side the bright and dark unfold;
But never, mortal, till you reach the end
Will you behold the fabled pot of gold!

SPEECH

What is the speech of the hills? — "God's temples are we!"
What is the speech of the winds? — "We are God's breath!"
What is the speech, the immutable speech of the sea?
It ranges through all of the changes of life and of death!

MADRIGALS

THE BOWERS OF PARADISE

Oh, traveller, who hast wandered far
'Neath southern sun and northern star,
Say where the fairest regions are!

Friend, underneath whatever skies
Love looks in love-returning eyes,
There are the bowers of paradise!

BE YE IN LOVE WITH APRIL-TIDE

Be ye in love with April-tide?
I' faith, in love am I!
For now 't is sun, and now 't is shower,
And now 't is frost, and now 't is flower,
And now 't is Laura laughing-eyed,
And now 't is Laura shy!

Ye doubtful days, oh, slower glide!
Still frown and smile, oh, sky!
Some beauty unforeseen I trace
In every change of Laura's face; —
Be ye in love with April-tide?
I' faith, in love am I!

LOVE'S VAGRANT

North and south and east and west
I have roamed a weary while,
But have found no restful bourn
Like the garden of thy smile.

North and south and east and west
I have strayed in errant wise,
But have seen no guiding gleam
Like the lovelight of thine eyes.

North and south and east and west
I have watched the day's eclipse,
But have won no precious meed
Like the guerdon of thy lips.

North and south and east and west
Vagrant still I roam and roam,
Hearkening through the lonely night
For thy voice to call me home.

ELUSION

Cleavage of sea and sky,
Ever elusive line,
Though I follow it far,
Far as the Ultimate Isles,
Never it seems more nigh, —
Shifting shadow and shine, —
Dim as a distant star
That beckons and beguiles.

Dawn-dream of my heart,
Dusk-dream of my soul,
Though I follow thee long
Into the night's deep shades,
Never attained thou art,
Never I gain the goal;
Thou art like a song
That ever and ever evades.

A SOUTHERN TWILIGHT

A LITTLE shallow silver urn,
  High in the east the new moon hung;
  Amid the palms a fountain flung
    Its snowy floss, and there, above,
With its impassioned unconcern,
    A hidden bird discoursed of love.

I felt your hand upon my arm
  Flutter as doth a thrush's wing,
  Then tighten. Sweet, how small a thing
    Draws kindred spirits heart to heart!
More was that hour's elusive charm
    To us than eloquence or art.

A SAILOR'S SONG

We kissed good-bye in the gloaming
Ere the moon crept up the sky;
"When, love, will you be homing?"
She cried, with a teary eye;
"When will you cease from roaming
The breast of the barren sea,
And come to another breast for rest, —
To the longing heart o' me?"
Then I said to her, low and slow, —
"Oh, it 's ever the lad must go,
And it 's ever the lass must stay,
And that is the tale of the world-old woe
Till the trump of the judgment-day !"

Still I hear her voice enthralling,
And I see her standing there,
With the night's deep shadows falling
On the dawn-break of her hair.
And ever her calling, calling,
Floats over the southern sea, —
"Come back to my aching breast with rest
For the longing heart o' me!"
But I cry to her, low and slow, —

A SAILOR'S SONG

"Oh, it 's ever the lad must go,
And it 's ever the lass must stay,
And that is the tale of world-old woe
Till the trump of the judgment-day !"

IVY LANE

(A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY LOVE SONG)

Ivy Lane in Devon, —
That's the place for me!
The sweet air mellow
With the burden of the bee;
High up in heaven
The blue, blue glow;
But Ivy Lane in London, —
O no, no!

Bare walls sullen
In the grim gray air;
Close-shut windows
With a cold blank stare;
Never lark or linnet
A-warbling low;
Ivy Lane in London, —
O no, no!

But Ivy Lane in Devon, —
Sunlight and song,
And beauty of blossoms
The glad day long;

IVY LANE

Then love in the twilight
  With starry eyes aglow . . .
Ivy Lane in London, —
  O no, no!

Ivy Lane in London, —
  Stress and strain and strife,
All of the sweetness
  Hurried out of life!
But far from the clamor
  By the wide west sea,
Ivy Lane in Devon, —
  That's the place for me!

EVEN-SONG

Now the west is warm, and now
Plaintive is the bird on bough;
Now the primrose shyly opes,
  Watching for its sister stars,
And the flocks adown the slopes
  Loiter toward the pasture bars.
Now that thickening shadows throng,
This shall be our even-song;

Unto youth, with night above,
Welcome are the wings of love;
Unto age, when shades grow deep,
Welcome are the wings of sleep!

Now the brooding ear receives
Little laughters from the leaves;
Now the breeze is like a breath
  Over seas from shores of spice,
And the heart within us saith,
"We are nigh to paradise!"
Now that discord were a wrong,
This shall be our even-song;

EVEN-SONG

Unto age, when shades grow deep,
Welcome are the wings of sleep;
Unto youth, with night above,
Welcome are the wings of love!

SYLVIA IN THE SPRINGTIME

Voice of the youth of the year,
Wren-song and thrush-song and cuckoo-note clear!
Melody's core, the articulate soul of the Spring, —
Oh, to hear Sylvia sing!

Flower of the youth of the year,
Bell of the hyacinth, daffodil-spear!
Day-dream of beauty and veriest vision of grace, —
Oh, to see Sylvia's face!

THERE IS NO STARRY POWER

THERE is no starry power
  Can praise her overmuch
Who's fairer than the flower
  That knows her gentle touch;
Hers is the melody
  Of all the birds that sing,
And she, where'er she be,
  Is my eternal spring!

Rapt winds, or low or loud,
  The dawn's first golden ray,
Clear rill and sunset cloud,
  No fitting laud have they!
Love's own immortal hand
  Had her for perfecting,
And she, through all the land,
  Makes my eternal spring!

NEVER SAY THE WORLD GROWS OLD

NEVER say the world grows old!
Never say that love grows cold!
Nay, the world's as young to-day
As when first the pyramids
Saw the golden dawning ray;
And love looks from lifted lids
Warm as when Semerimis
Trembled 'neath her lover's kiss
In the bowers of Nineveh!

SERENADE

Slumber has stilled the note
In the thrush's tender throat,
But the cheery cricket sings,
And the moth's dark wings
Flutter along the night
Through the pale moonlight;
Soft may thine eyelids meet!
Sleep on, oh, sweet!

Never a stir 'mid the stars
Of the jasmine at the bars
Of her casement, looking away
Toward the unborn day.
Mount, and an entrance win,
Steal in, my song, steal in!
Soft may thine eyelids meet!
Sleep on, oh, sweet!

Steal in, but breathe not above
The lowest whisper of love;
Hover around her there
In that holy air;
Glide into her dreams, and be
A memory of me!
Soft may thine eyelids meet!
Sleep on, oh, sweet!

A SEA SONG

Dolphins under and sea-gulls over
The surge and shift of the dipping tide,
And you, my rover, my blithe sea-rover,
Sailing the path of the undenied.

In dreams I follow you, oh, my rover,
Wide, for the ways of the sea are wide;
Come back, come back, when the voyage is over, —
Back to the heart of the long denied!

NOCTURNE IN THE SOUTH

The slender new moon seems as frail
  As thin ice 'twixt November reeds;
A bird-note from a distant swale
  Mounts and recedes.

A wan moth dips across the dusk
  Like a magnolia's ghost, and then,
Amid the scent of rose and musk,
  Is gone again.

The dews gleam beryl-wise; you come,
  Your hair caught up in amber strands,
Life's bliss — its whole ecstatic sum —
  In your white hands.

SONG

Deep is the night — so deep —
  And long — so long!
And shall it be for sleep,
  Or shall it be for song?

Nay, not for sleep while throng
  The burning stars above!
But let it be for song,
  And let it be for love!

The varied Book of Life,
How hurriedly we con !
Through pages sown with grief and strife
We reach the colophon.

We would peruse it still
Despite its stress, but nay,
It must be closed, saith the Great Will,
And laid aside for aye !

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
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